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Thursday, February 25, 2010

Testimony in support of S.B. 63 AA Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick
Leave to Employees
Presenting for Service Employees International Union Local 32BJ
Art Perry CT Political Director

My name is Art Perry and I'm the CT Political Director for SEIU Local 32BJ which has 4,400 members in Ct as part of more than 120,000 members in States and Washington D.C. from Miami to Storrs, CT. Our members include security officers; doormen, porters, and maintenance workers; bus drivers and aides; window cleaners and food service workers, health care employees and child care workers.

Thank you, Senator Prague and Representative Ryan and members of the Labor Committee for raising this important bill. I speak today on behalf of our members in support of S.B. 63 AA Mandating Employers Provide Paid Sick Leave to Employees. We have presented in the packet before you supportive data and workers stories that I collected from our International Union website at WWW.SEIU.ORG.

These attachments in the packet highlight: Workers stories, information on a Federal bill to give grants to States that pass paid sick leave laws, information on workers fired or threatened for taking time off because they weren't covered by paid sick days, polling data showing that people are substantially more likely to vote for a candidate who supports paid sick days for all workers and data showing that the lack of this law disproportionately effects women and minority workers negatively.

Our unions support for this bill can be summed up in the stories of at least 2 of our members. There is the story of Anthony a cleaner at the UCONN campus in Storrs. One day Anthony visited me at the office after his overnight shift and could barely walk and his knee was visibly swollen, I asked what was wrong and he said that he was suffering from arthritis, I asked why was he walking on it and he told me that he had to wait until his days off to rest it because he doesn't have paid sick leave and that he couldn't afford to lose a days' pay because he has a mortgage and didn't want to fall behind and harm his credit or lose his home. Then there is Anna whose story was in the Hartford Courant during the H1N1 flu season. Anna came to the office following a doctor's visit with her daughter who was wearing a surgical mask and looking visible distressed, sick. Anna said that she was concerned because her daughter was infected and sick and needing care. But Anna was afraid that if she stayed home without pay to care for her sick daughter that she could be fired or disciplined.

Everyday workers like Anthony and Anna find themselves stuck between this rock and a hard place because they are not covered by paid sick days. So, workers send their sick children to school, infecting others and go to work sick infecting their coworkers and the public and risking their health



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because they can't take care of themselves and get well. Workers that are already having a hard time keeping a roof over their heads and raising a family need paid sick days. This bill makes sense and especially now when we are facing unknown H1N1 outbreaks, which we have not seen the worst of. Now's the time to pass this law and give CT worker the same benefits that you and I have to protect and take care of ourselves and our families and coworkers and the public. The workers I represent want to be able to protect and take care of themselves and their families and coworkers and the public, too.

SUPPORT PAID SICK DAYS

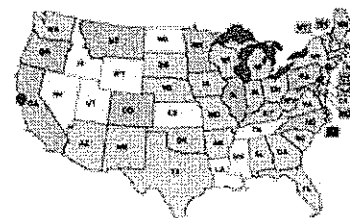
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IN THE STATES

CONNECTICUT

By the Numbers

Over 630,000 Connecticut workers — 44 percent of the private sector workers in the state — are not able to take a paid sick day when they are ill. (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Institute for Women's Policy Research)



About the Campaign

Connecticut's campaign is led by **Connecticut Working Families**. They are campaigning for a basic workplace standard that would enable workers to accrue one hour of paid sick time for every 40 hours worked, capped at 52 hours (or 6.5 days) per year. Under the paid sick days standard, Connecticut workers would be able to take a paid sick day to recover from illness, seek preventive care, care for a sick family member, or seek assistance related to family violence, sexual assault or violence.

Connecticut's bill was the first in the nation to pass through a chamber of a state legislature by passing the State Senate in 2007. It passed in the Senate again in 2008, and then the full House of Representatives in 2009. Advocates have vowed to build on this progress until they secure a victory for Connecticut workers.

Partner Profile

Connecticut Connecticut Working Families leads the Connecticut paid sick days campaign, called the Everybody Benefits coalition. The coalition also includes public health advocates, women's right organizations, labor organizations, human service providers and more. Connecticut Working Families, an alliance of labor unions, community organizations, and neighborhood activists, is dedicated to fighting for an economy that works for everyone, focusing on paid sick days, access to affordable healthcare, fair wages, affordable housing, and quality public education.

To learn more about both of these organizations, visit <http://www.everybodybenefits.org/>.

Stories from Connecticut

"I JUST got out of the ER today after a 3 day stay. i called out today but i have to go in tomorrow even though its against my wishes because i can not afford to lose the money and i can not afford to risk losing my job. so i have to go in tomorrow even though it could be putting a risk on my health."

— Remme, Norwich, Connecticut

"I work under a negotiated contract between my union and my employer. I am given 15 paid sick days per year. I may "bank" up to 180 acquired "sick days" but I may not acquire more than 180 days in my "sick days bank". I will not be reimbursed for any "unused sick days" in my "sick day bank" when I retire. I don't know how people can survive without paid sick days. Any human being can become ill. Nobody is immune from illness. Families that depend on income to pay their bills are deprived of that income should the wage earner(s) become ill and have to miss work. The most deleterious effects of income deprivation are felt by children and the elderly. In the wealthiest nation on the planet this is intolerable!"

— Timothy, East Hartford, Connecticut

"MY COMPANY PUNISHES US FOR BEING SICK!!! ALL OF US DRIVERS DRIVE THE ELDERLY, HANDICAPPED, AND EMOTIONALLY CHALLENGED. WE DO WHEEL CHAIRS, DOOR TO DOOR SERVICE, AND ARE CONSTANTLY EXPOSED TO THE ELEMENTS, AND EVERYONE'S GERMS!!! YET WHEN WE GET SICK THEY USE THEIR POINT SYSTEM AGAINST US, TO MANY POINT IN A 90 DAY FLOATING PERIOD RESULTS IN SUSPENSION, AND EVENTUALLY TERMINATION!"

— Mary, Vernon Rockville, Connecticut

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SEIU Blog

7:32 PM Eastern - February 11, 2010

Everyone gets sick, but many workers don't get time to get better

The CDC strongly recommends that you stay home if you or your child gets sick, whether it's with the flu or H1N1 virus. What the CDC doesn't report is that that's not an option for a lot of people--they leave this part out. "Most voters assume people have sick leave--that their employers just provide it," said Lake Research Partners' Anita Sharma during a Fem2.0 podcast discussion last week on work/life policies and issues. Sharma described a focus group Lake Research did recently, where they asked what percent of people don't have sick days. "When we told them, they were absolutely shocked," she said.

And indeed, it is shocking that in the richest country in the world, around 40 percent of private-sector workers don't get any paid sick days at all. Low-income workers are doing even worse--76 percent have no paid sick leave. The U.S. may pride itself on having family-friendly workplace policies, but we are actually one of the only rich nations in the world that fails to guarantee their workers any form of paid sick leave. And as is the case with many social and economic problems, being forced to work while sick disproportionately affects women, who make up 22 million of the 57 million US workers who are unable to take a sick day. In addition, mothers are the primary or co-breadwinners in nearly two-thirds of American families.

Working families need some kind of backup when caring for others means they can't be at the office--and acting as a caregiver shouldn't have to result in the loss of a day's wages or worse, one's job.

There is a rising recognition that employers need to recognize the changing dynamics of families, and institute guaranteed paid sick days for employees. But like U.S. Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney said during Friday's Fem2.0 podcast, "No one gives away power. We have to demand change." More and more organizations are taking it upon themselves to fight for change in workplace policies so they reflect the reality on the ground for millions of American and American families.

Currently, San Francisco, Washington, DC and Milwaukee, WI are the only cities in the U.S. that guarantee paid sick days for workers, but 15 states have active campaigns to move sick day initiatives. President Obama's recently proposed 2011 federal budget includes a \$50 million State Paid Leave Fund, which would provide start-up support for state governments that want to enact paid leave options for workers.

There's federal legislation being pushed as well -- The Healthy Families Act would create a new national standard, guaranteeing employees one paid hour off for each 30 hours worked and enabling them to earn up to seven paid sick days a year. You can join the [National Partnership](#), [Momsrising.org](#), [9to5.org](#), [NOW](#), [AAUW](#) and many other partner organizations (including SEIU) in demanding our country's lawmakers support paid sick days -- [take action here](#).

* To listen to Fem2.0's February 5 podcast Fighting Words! Creating Change for Working Families, [click here](#). Check out Fem2.0's blog carnival about women and work (which is taking place now!).

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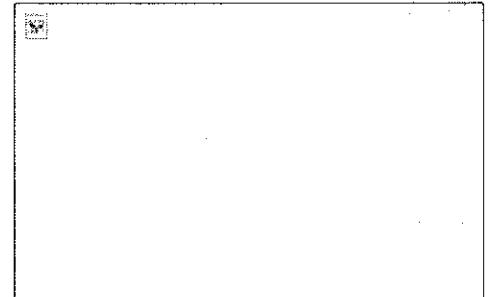
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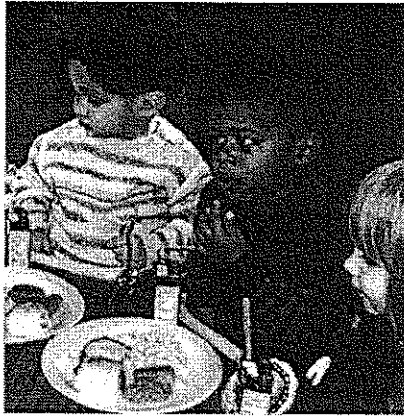
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SEIU Blog

12:02 PM Eastern - December 15, 2009

Sick Sodexo Workers Forced to Suck it Up at Work

When they get sick, there is a significant portion of the American workforce that faces a tough choice about whether to call in sick, or face serious consequences when it comes to retaining their jobs and feeding their families.



Why are you even here?"

Chicago Tribune reporter Bonnie Miller Rubin recently interviewed two food service workers employed with Sodexo, Veronica Mendoza and Cathy Gaul, on the subject of sick leave. Their striking candidness on the topic resulted in a front page news story, as they shared the extents to which they'd gone to try to safeguard their low-paying jobs.

"I pretty much have to be at death's door before I'll call in sick," says SEIU Local 1 member Veronica Mendoza, a cafeteria worker who's employed with Sodexo in Chicago. For her, the main issue with missing work is economic, as she strives to contribute to her daughter's college tuition each paycheck. "Missing even one day can be a chunk out of your paycheck...As long as you can function, you go in."

Estimates show that roughly 75 percent of low-wage workers don't have a single paid sick day they can use for themselves or to care for a family member. Worse, because they make so little, losing a day's pay (or even their jobs) just isn't an option. A 2008 survey by the National Opinion Research Center (NOP) at the University of Chicago found that people without paid sick days are more likely to go to work when they feel really sick, and 68 percent of those *not eligible* for paid sick days had said they had gone to work with a contagious illness like the flu.

In the *Chicago Tribune* article, St. Charles North High School lunch lady and SEIU Local 1 member Cathy Gaul recently received a written reprimand from Sodexo - which is now a permanent part of her personnel file - for missing four days of work for her own illness and to care for her sick child.

NOP's research also found that **one out of every six workers have been fired, demoted or otherwise punished for taking time off because they weren't covered by paid sick days.** And if you work for one of the world's largest food and facilities companies, Sodexo? Your chances of facing disciplinary action if you happen to fall ill are sickeningly higher.

For another Sodexo employee in New Orleans, the consequences were much worse. When custodial worker Tiyan Landry got the call at work that her infant son had a high fever with bumps and blisters over his entire body, her first instinct was to rush to his side. But before she did, she called her Sodexo manager to tell him that she had to go to the emergency room, volunteering to take an unpaid sick day. But hours later her manager called her back, demanding that she get back to work and leave her child - and threatened to fire her if she did not.

In the face of the H1N1 pandemic, emergency H1N1 legislation has been introduced by Sen. Chris Dodd that would require employers with more than 15 workers to provide

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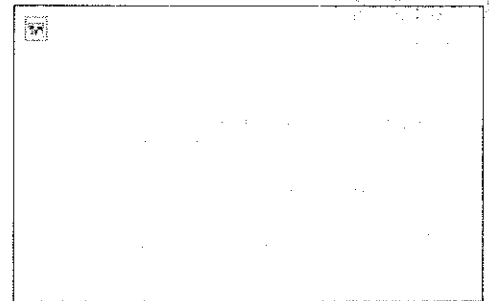
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seven days of paid sick leave if they or their children come down with either H1N1 or seasonal flu. While it's appalling that big business groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Retail Federation oppose the measure, **Sodexo's blatant refusal to allow an employee to miss work, and threaten to fire her if she does, is one of the most egregious workplace standards injustice we've seen.**

For a huge multi-national corporation like Sodexo *not* to afford their workers sick days to care for themselves and their families is simply unacceptable. Every worker should have paid sick days--it's a matter of right vs. wrong; and of values. Workers like Veronica, Cathy and Tiyana shouldn't face threats of discipline or lose pay for making the same choices that any of us would make.

If you agree, get involved in our campaign to clean up Sodexo here.

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CATEGORIES: blog, education, facilities services, healthcare, illinois, jobs and wages, justice for janitors, members, political, property services

TAGS: Cathy Gaul, fire, food service worker, food service workers, h1n1, paid sick leave, pay, sick, sick leave, sodexo, swine flu, Veronica Mendoza, workers' rights

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American Workers Overwhelmingly Support Paid Sick Days, Labor Day Survey Finds

One in Six Workers Say They or a Family Member Have Been Fired, Suspended, Punished or Threatened by an Employer Due to Illness

WASHINGTON, DC – More than three-quarters of workers polled in a national survey released today view paid sick days as a basic right of employment that should be guaranteed by the government. The survey was conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago and funded by the Public Welfare Foundation in Washington, DC.

Having paid sick days was seen as “very important” by 77 percent of those surveyed and 86 percent think that employers should be required by law to provide them. Respondents ranked paid sick days on a par with a minimum wage, overtime pay and family and medical leave – and considered it more important than maximum hour limits and the right to join a union. At least 80 percent rated paid sick days highly as a basic worker’s right and a basic workplace standard.

The strong support for paid sick days crosses all political and demographic lines and includes approval of pro-rated paid sick leave for part-time workers. The new survey also finds that workers without paid sick days are significantly more likely than those with paid sick days to report to work when they are contagious.

The survey also found that people are substantially more likely to vote for a candidate who supports paid sick days for all workers. Forty-six percent of those surveyed say they are more likely to vote for a candidate who supports paid sick days, while only 10 percent would be less likely to do so.

- more -

“Supporting paid sick days is a plus for political candidates,” concluded Dr. Tom W. Smith, a Senior Fellow at the National Opinion Research Center and director of the survey. “Both before and after hearing arguments for and against paid sick days, voters indicate they are more likely to vote for a candidate who backed this requirement.”

More than 40 percent of private sector workers -- and 75 percent of low-wage workers -- lack paid sick days. San Francisco and Washington, DC are the only jurisdictions with paid sick day laws in place, although a dozen states considered legislation this year and the issue will be on the ballot in Milwaukee and Ohio in November. It is expected to be taken up in more states next year, and at the federal level Congress is considering the Healthy Families Act, which would provide seven paid sick days annually to workers in businesses with 15 or more employees.

Other survey findings demonstrate why paid sick days are important. According to the survey:

- One of six workers reported that he/she or a family member had been fired, suspended, punished or threatened with being fired for taking time off due to personal illness or to care for a sick child or other relative.
- 68 percent of workers without paid sick days reported going to work with the flu or some other contagious illness, compared to 53 percent of workers who received paid sick days.
- Survey respondents rated concern about sick employees spreading diseases at work as the most convincing argument for paid sick days legislation.

“The lack of paid sick days has real consequences for Americans forced to choose between losing a day’s pay or going to work sick,” said Deborah Leff, president of the Public Welfare Foundation. “It’s difficult for employees to be productive when they are not well. They also expose co-workers and customers to illness. Providing paid sick days -- which this survey shows is favored by the vast majority of Americans -- is a simple matter of good employer practice and good public health.”

“Across all socio-demographic groups, majorities endorse paid sick days as a fundamental workplace necessity that employers should be required to provide. The lack of paid sick days is a concern to those lacking coverage and is associated with dissatisfaction with one’s job,” survey director Tom W. Smith added. Support runs strongest among women, African-Americans, Hispanics and lower-income workers.

At least 70 percent of respondents favor requiring both small and large businesses to provide paid sick days and more than 80 percent also agree that part-time workers should receive sick days proportional to their working hours.

- 30 -

Copies of the full survey report can be found at www.norc.uchicago.edu and at www.publicwelfare.org.

The Public Welfare Foundation is a national foundation with assets of more than \$500 million that supports efforts to ensure fundamental rights and opportunities for people in need. Its primary areas of focus are Workers' Rights, Health Reform, and Criminal and Juvenile Justice. For more information, please visit www.publicwelfare.org.



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THE FEDERAL BUDGET FISCAL YEAR 2011

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Supporting Middle Class Families

Having steered the economy back from the brink of a depression, the Administration is committed to moving the Nation from recession to recovery by sparking job creation to get millions of Americans back to work and building a new foundation for the long-term prosperity for all American families. To do this, the 2011 Budget makes critical investments in the key areas that will help to reverse the decline in economic security that American families have experienced over the past decade with investments in education, clean energy, infrastructure, and innovation.

But even as we meet the challenge of the recession and work to build an economy that works for all American families, we must also change the way Washington does business – ending programs that don't work, streamlining those that do, cracking down on special interest access, and bringing a new responsibility to how tax dollars are spent. The President's Budget takes the steps to help jumpstart job creation, works to strengthen the economic security of American families, and makes the tough choices to put our Nation back on the path to fiscal responsibility.

To support middle class families, the Budget will:

Spur Job Creation. The economy is back from the brink and is showing signs of health, but this positive news has barely been felt in the labor markets. While we are no longer hemorrhaging jobs at the rate we were last year, unemployment is still unacceptably high. Looking to the future, the investments made in the Budget in education, clean energy, infrastructure, and in several other areas will lay a new foundation for economic growth and job creation. But in the short-term, it is clear that the some targeted measures are required to spur private sector job creation. The Administration will work with Congress to implement a jobs creation package along the lines the President announced in December of 2009. It will include immediate steps to help small businesses grow and hire, to upgrade and build infrastructure, and create jobs through energy efficiency and clean energy investments. In addition, to help those most affected by the recession, the Budget will extend emergency assistance to seniors and families with children, Unemployment Insurance benefits, COBRA tax credits, and relief to states and localities to prevent layoffs.

Extend the Making Work Pay Tax Cut. As part of the Recovery Act, the Administration puts into place the Making Work Pay Tax Credit. The broadest middle-class tax cut in American history, it helped 110 million families. The Budget proposes to extend this tax cut for one year

Help Families Struggling with Child Care Costs. The Budget will nearly double the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit for middle-class families making under \$85,000 a year by increasing their credit rate from 20 percent to 35 percent of child care expenses. Nearly all eligible families making under \$115,000 a year would see a larger credit. The Budget also provides critical support for young children and their families by building on historic increases provided in ARRA. The Budget provides an additional \$989 million for Head Start and Early Head Start to continue to serve 64,000 additional children and families funded in ARRA. The Budget also provides an additional \$1.6 billion for the Child Care and Development Fund in preparation for reauthorization to expand child care opportunities, and improve health, safety, and outcomes for children. This request will allow States to provide child care subsidies to 1.6 million children, 235,000 more than could be served without the increase.

Support Family Caregivers. The Budget includes \$103 million for the Administration on Aging's Caregiver Initiative, an effort to expand help to families and seniors so that caregivers can better manage their multiple responsibilities and seniors can live in the community for as long as possible. Without creating new programs, this initiative provides new resources to support the network of agencies in local communities across the country that already provide critical help to seniors and caregivers.

Expand Financial Aid for Students and Make Historic Investments in Improving Education, from Cradle Through College. The Budget supports legislation that has passed the House and is pending in the Senate that would reform student lending to eliminate tens of billions of dollars in wasteful subsidies to banks, and instead, provide loans directly to students on an efficient basis that uses private and nonprofit companies to deliver services. This measure would then use savings to make historic investments to increase college access and success, and would lay a foundation for success for America's youngest children. In addition to expanded Pell Grants and a simplified student aid system, these investments include a new American Graduation Initiative that will strengthen and support America's community colleges, focus on college completion, and graduate 5 million more students by 2020. Finally, to help graduates overburdened with student loan debt, the Administration will strengthen income-based repayment plans for student loans by reducing monthly payments and shortening the repayment period so that overburdened borrowers will pay only 10 percent of their discretionary income in loan repayments and can have their remaining debt forgiven after 20 years.

Improve Retirement Security. After a lifetime of employment, American workers deserve to know that their efforts have resulted in a secure retirement. The Administration is committed to giving Americans more and better choices to save for retirement while also strengthening the existing private pension system. The Budget proposes to expand and improve employment-based retirement security by establishing automatic workplace pensions, doubling the Small Employer Pension Plan Startup Credit from \$500 a year to \$1,000 per year, and reforming and expanding the Saver's Credit by modifying the existing Saver's Credit to provide a 50-percent match on the retirement savings of families that earn less than \$85,000 (up to \$1000 of savings would be matched). The Budget also proposes a number of initiatives to improve the transparency and adequacy of 401(k) retirement savings plans, through a majority of American workers save for retirement. In addition, the Budget will support efforts streamline efforts to bring automatic enrollment to these plans in order to boost participation.

Enhance Enforcement of Equal Pay Laws. For the first time, women make up half of all workers on our payrolls and seven out of 10 families with children are made up of either two working parents or a single working parent. But too often women don't earn the same amount for doing the same job and the same work as a man. Building on his commitment to enforce equal pay for equal work, the President's budget includes an \$18 million increase to improve compliance, public education, and enforcement of equal pay laws. The Budget also provides almost \$2 million to the Department of Labor for research and dissemination of information on income and job disparities—an increase of nearly 300 percent over 2010.

Help States Provide Paid Family Leave to Workers. Too many families must make the painful choice between the care of their families and a paycheck they desperately need. The Family and Medical Leave Act allows workers to take job-protected time off unpaid, but millions of families can't afford to lose that paycheck. A handful of States have enacted policies to offer paid family leave, but more States should have the chance. The Budget establishes a \$50 million State Paid Leave Fund within the Department of Labor that will provide competitive grants to help States that choose to launch paid-leave programs to cover their start-up costs. The Budget also provides resources to allow the Department of Labor to explore ways to improve the collection of data related to intersection of work and family responsibilities.

Boost Funding for Workplace Safety. The Budget includes a \$68 million (4 percent) increase for the Department of Labor's worker protection agencies to make sure they have the resources to meet their responsibilities to America's working men and women.

Protect Benefits for Employees by Ensuring Proper Classification. When employees are misclassified as independent contractors, they are deprived of benefits and protections to which they are legally entitled – such as overtime and unemployment benefits. Misclassification also has a budgetary impact, reducing receipts in Treasury and the Social Security, Medicare and Unemployment Insurance Trust Funds. As part of the 2011 Budget, the Departments of Labor and Treasury are pursuing a joint proposal that eliminates incentives in law for employers to misclassify their employees; enhances the ability of both agencies to penalize employers who misclassify; and restores protections to employees who have been denied them because of their improper classification. This proposal would increase Treasury receipts by more than \$7 billion over 10 years. The 2011 Budget also includes an additional \$25 million for the Department of Labor to hire 100 additional enforcement personnel and for competitive grants to boost States' incentives and capacity to address this problem.